

CLAIMS

1. A mutual rating system for rating an object associated with a network, comprising:

5 a plurality of rating information storing terminal devices connected to the network, each rating information storing terminal device having stored therein rating information related to an object previously rated by the user; and

one or more rating information collecting terminal devices
10 for collecting rating information related to a desired object from one or more online rating information storing terminal devices,

wherein each rating information collecting terminal device includes a rating analyzing section operable to analyze the rating information collected from said one or more rating information
15 storing terminal devices to obtain a rating for the desired object.

2. The mutual rating system according to claim 1, further comprising one or more content providing terminal devices each having content stored therein and transmitting the content on
20 demand,

wherein each rating information collecting terminal device further includes a content demanding section operable to demand a content providing terminal device having the desired content stored therein to transmit the desired content.

3. The mutual rating system according to claim 2,

wherein each rating information storing terminal device further includes a download history storing section having stored therein a communication history of content downloaded from said one or more content providing terminal devices,

wherein each rating information collecting terminal device further includes a communication history collecting section operable to, when demanding said one or more content providing terminal devices to transmit the desired content, collect a communication history related to said one or more content providing terminal devices stored in online rating information storing terminal devices, and

wherein the rating analyzing section analyzes the communication history collected by the communication history collecting section to determine whether to download the desired content from a content providing terminal device having the desired content stored therein.

4. The mutual rating system according to claim 3,

wherein the download history storing section stores the communication history so as to be associated with content types, and

wherein the rating analyzing section refers to the content types to determine whether to demand content transmission.

5. The mutual rating system according to claim 2,
wherein said one or more content providing terminal devices
each include an upload history storing section into which a
communication history of content uploaded to the rating information
5 collecting terminal devices is stored, and

wherein said one or more content providing terminal devices
each determine whether to perform content upload based on the
communication history stored in the upload history storing section.

10 6. The mutual rating system according to claim 5,
wherein the upload history storing section stores the
communication history so as to be associated with content types,
and

wherein said one or more content providing terminal devices
15 each refer to the content types to determine whether to perform
the content upload.

7. The mutual rating system according to claim 2,
wherein each rating information collecting terminal device
20 further includes:

a rating information input section operable to cause,
after the completion of download of the desired content, the user
to input rating information related to said one or more content
providing terminals and/or content providers of the desired content,
25 and to store the inputted rating information; and

a rating information feeding back section operable to feed back the rating information stored by the rating information input section to other rating information collecting terminal devices and rating information storing terminal devices on the
5 network, and

wherein each rating information storing terminal device further includes a fed back rating information storing section which uses a prescribed technique to analyze the rating information fed back from the rating information feeding back section, and
10 stores the analyzed rating information.

8. The mutual rating system according to claim 1,

wherein each rating information collecting terminal device further includes a rating information storing section having stored
15 therein the rating information related to the objects previously rated by the user, and

wherein each rating information storing terminal device further includes:

a rating information collecting section operable to
20 collect the rating information related to the desired object from one or more online rating information collecting terminal devices;
and

a collected rating information analyzing section operable to analyze the rating information collected by the rating
25 information collecting section to obtain a rating for the desired

object.

9. A rating information collecting terminal device for obtaining rating information related to an object associated with a network to which a plurality of rating information storing terminal devices are connected, each rating information storing terminal device having stored therein rating information related to objects previously rated by the user, the rating information collecting terminal device comprising:

10 a rating information collecting section operable to collect rating information related to a desired object from one or more online rating information storing terminal devices; and

a rating analyzing section operable to analyze the rating information collected by the rating information collecting section to obtain a rating for the desired object.

10. The rating information collecting terminal device according to claim 9, wherein the rating information collecting section collects the rating information from said one or more rating information storing terminal devices only when a prescribed condition is satisfied.

11. The rating information collecting terminal device according to claim 9, wherein the rating information collecting section collects the rating information from all the online rating

information storing terminal devices.

12. The rating information collecting terminal device according to claim 9, wherein the rating information collecting
5 section collects the rating information from a specific rating information storing terminal.

13. The rating information collecting terminal device according to claim 9, wherein the object is a user on the network,
10 an online terminal device, or content stored in the online terminal device.

14. The rating information collecting terminal device according to claim 9, further comprising a reliability information
15 storing section having stored therein reliability information which indicates reliabilities of the rating information storing terminal devices and/or rating information providers present on the network, wherein when obtaining a rating result, the rating information analyzing section refers to the reliability
20 information stored in the reliability information storing section and prioritizes rating information provided by highly reliable rating information storing terminal devices and/or highly reliable rating information providers.

25 15. The rating information collecting terminal device

according to claim 14, wherein the rating information analyzing section uses weighting coefficients assigned as the reliabilities to the reliability information to obtain a weighted average, and thereby to obtain the rating result.

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16. The rating information collecting terminal device according to claim 9, further comprising a content demanding section operable to demand transmission of desired content from one or more content providing terminal devices connected to the
10 network, each content providing terminal device having content stored therein and transmitting the content on demand.

17. The rating information collecting terminal device according to claim 16, wherein the content demanding section
15 automatically demands content transmission from said one or more content providing terminal devices based on a rating result obtained by the rating analyzing section.

18. The rating information collecting terminal device
20 according to claim 16, further comprising a download history storing section to which a communication history of content downloaded from said one or more content providing terminal devices, wherein the content demanding section determines whether to demand content transmission based on the communication history stored
25 in the download history storing section.

19. The rating information collecting terminal device according to claim 18,

wherein the download history storing section stores the communication history so as to be associated with content types, and

wherein the content demanding section refers to the content types to determine whether to demand the content transmission.

20. The rating information collecting terminal device according to claim 16, further comprising a rating information input section operable to cause, after the completion of download of the desired content, the user to input rating information related to said one or more content providing terminal devices and/or content providers of the desired content, and to store the inputted rating information.

21. The rating information collecting terminal device according to claim 20, further comprising a rating information feeding back section operable to feed back the rating information stored by the rating information input section to other rating information collecting terminal devices and rating information storing terminal devices present on the network.

22. The rating information collecting terminal device

according to claim 21, wherein the rating information feeding back section transmits the rating information stored by the rating information input section to all the online rating information collecting terminal devices and all the online rating information
5 storing terminal devices.

23. The rating information collecting terminal device according to claim 21, wherein the rating information feeding back section transmits the rating information stored by the rating
10 information input section only to a specific rating information collecting terminal device and/or a specific rating information storing terminal device.

24. The rating information collecting terminal device
15 according to claim 23, wherein the rating information feeding back section transmits the rating information stored by the rating information input section to rating information collecting terminal devices and/or rating information storing terminal devices which have returned rating information in response to a
20 demand to transmit the rating information.

25. The rating information collecting terminal device according to claim 23, wherein the rating information feeding back section transmits the rating information stored by the rating
25 information input section to rating information collecting

terminal devices and/or rating information storing terminal devices which have returned rating information, which is different from the rating information stored by the rating information input section, in response to a demand to transmit the rating information.

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26. The rating information collecting terminal device according to claim 21, further comprising a rating information updating section operable to update the rating information stored therein based on rating information fed back from another rating
10 information collecting terminal device.

27. The rating information collecting terminal device according to claim 21, further comprising a fed back information transmitting section operable to transmit rating information,
15 which has been fed back from another rating information collecting terminal device, to still another rating information collecting terminal device.

28. The rating information collecting terminal device
20 according to claim 20, further comprising a content rating information input section operable to cause, after reproduction of the desired content, the user to input rating information related to the desired content, and to store the inputted rating information.

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29. The rating information collecting terminal device according to claim 9, wherein the rating information indicates rating points for the objects.

5 30. The rating information collecting terminal device according to claim 9, wherein the rating information indicates distribution of the rating points for the objects.

31. A mutual rating system for rating an object associated
10 with a network, comprising:

a plurality of terminal devices each being connected to the network and having stored therein rating information related to objects previously rated by the user,

wherein each terminal device includes:

15 a rating information collecting section operable to collect the rating information from other online terminal devices; and

20 a rating analyzing section operable to analyze the rating information collected by the rating information collecting section to obtain a rating for a desired object.

32. A rating information obtaining program executed by a terminal device for obtaining rating information related to an object associated with a network to which a plurality of rating
25 information storing terminal devices are connected, each rating

information storing terminal device having stored therein rating information related to objects previously rated by the user, the rating information obtaining program causing the terminal device to perform the steps of:

5 collecting rating information related to a desired object from one or more online rating information storing terminal devices; and

 analyzing the collected rating information to obtain a rating for the desired object.

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